

A persistent faith

2:23 PM Jan 9th, 2013

by Shannon Shelton Miller

When the Marianist Sisters celebrated the 50th anniversary of their arrival at UD last October, Maria Ollier Burkett noted a line from Sister Laura Leming, F.M.I., regarding the “littleness” of the Marianist Sisters. Leming’s description of “littleness” referred to a recognition of God’s grace and presence in the everyday and ordinary parts of life, and how that “littleness” could make a significant and lasting impact on others.

Leming started a graduate assistant program in campus ministry 25 years ago with one assistant based in Marycrest, and Burkett completed the program in its early years. Without Leming’s “little” act, Burkett said, Burkett wouldn’t have received the practical and formative experience that led her to her current role as coordinator of program for Christian leadership in campus ministry. Campus ministry now has nine graduate assistants, and six current University staff members were once GAs.

More than 200 years ago, a French teenager’s “little” act of forming a small faith community with a group of friends was one of the catalysts that led to the founding of the Society of Mary.

“All three founders were doing this kind of work in a society in upheaval,” Burkett said. “Adèle was persistent. She had an idea at age 13 and was asking and requesting things that people of her age and gender didn’t ask.”

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Father William Joseph Chaminade organized religious communities with similar goals. After years of correspondence, the two began working together and, in 1816, Adèle founded Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Marianist Sisters.

Each January, the Marianist family around the world celebrates the lives of Adèle and Chaminade, two of the founders of the Society of Mary.

The University will recognize the feast day of Mother Adèle at 12:05 p.m. Jan. 10 with a Mass at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, followed by a reception in the Kennedy Union Torch Lounge. A celebration of Chaminade takes place 12:05 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, in the chapel, and the Founders’ Dinner Jan. 30 concludes the month.

Read the thoughts of a current Marianist Sister, Nicole Trahan, F.M.I., about how Adèle continues to inspire her spiritual walk at <http://udquickly.udayton.edu/scribblings/2013/01/reflections-on-adele/>

Reflections on Adèle

10:39 AM Jan 10th, 2013

by Sister Nicole Trahan, F.M.I.

Guest contributor Sister Nicole Trahan, F.M.I., offers her thoughts on Marianist founder Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon as we celebrate her life today.

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon was a woman ahead of her time and a woman wise for her years. A young woman who, though from a wealthy family, dedicated everything she had to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the poor. She was a young woman who was dedicated to a personal rule of life from the age of 12 and a foundress of a religious congregation before the age of 30. She was a visionary, wisdom figure and friend for her

sisters and the entire Marianist family. Her spirit has inspired thousands over the years and her spirit inspires me to live the life of a Marianist Sister.

There are many things that I admire about Adèle... her spunk, her courage, faith, compassion, vision... and her ability to really connect to people and maintain those connections.

Adèle realized that after the French Revolution young people needed support to live a Christian life and that the poor needed food, shelter and an education. So what did she do? She started a group so that they could offer each other support, pray together, learn about the faith and care for the needs of the poor. The group grew to more than 200 young women all over southwestern France — all through letter writing.

And what a letter writer she was! She only lived to be 38, but we have two volumes of her letters and know that many were destroyed at some point in history. One of my favorite quotes of hers, that I wish I could live a little more faithfully, is:

Let us make a pact between our heart and our tongue, never to speak when the heart is unsettled. If we had the courage to do this, we would avoid many failings, would acquire many merits, and would draw down graces from heaven. (Letter 301)

As a young woman, Adèle would give bread from her kitchen door and teach short catechism lessons to those who would come — feeding both body and spirit. She wrote in another letter:

Let us imitate the love of our Blessed Mother. Like her, let us render to all our brothers and sisters the corporal and spiritual services in our power. God considers as done to himself what we do to others. How this should motivate our charity! (Letter 128)

Adèle was courageous. I suppose living through the French Revolution could do that. When she and a small group decided that they would become religious, she wrote:

Let us get down to the work with courage and not let ourselves be frightened by the grandeur of the enterprise. Let us concentrate on what we are doing at the present moment, but let us do it well. (Letter 246)

Each Marianist Sister in the world has been gifted by the Spirit with a portion of the spirit of Adèle — our charism. And at times I can sense that Adèle is walking with me... encouraging me when I'm tempted to remain silent... smiling as I try to articulate a vision... and standing next to me as I discern possible the path ahead of me.

May each of us, as we move through our day-to-day life, be graced with a portion of Adele's spirit. May all of us act with complete trust in God and with courage, serving the needs of those around us and supporting others with whom we walk this journey.

Epiphany Thoughts by Adele

January 5, 1813 (Adele is 23 years old)

My good and dear friend, I come to wish you a blessed New Year. My wish is that you will profit by the days the Lord is good enough to grant us and at the end of this year we will be better than we are now. Let us return to the crib, my very dear friend, and with the Magi bring our gifts to Jesus. Boundless is the gratitude he has the right to expect from us! Now what kind of a return ought we make for such a grace? You know the answer, dear friend: We must follow the teachings and the spirit of our faith. We cannot be Christians in name only; we must be such in practice. What do the Gospels teach us? Blessed are those who weep... woe to you who are rich...love your enemies...do good to those who persecute you ...carry your cross.. deny your own self. There you have a series of maxims greatly opposed to our natural tendencies. Yet they are the mark of a true Christian. Either throw the Gospels into the fire, or believe and practice them...Yet, how far we are from that virtuous state, which we are called to by our Baptism! Let us find the strength we need at the foot of the crib of our divine Jesus, through the intercession of the holy Magi. They conquered every difficulty which might have prevented them from coming to find the new Messiah. Farewell dear friend - I embrace you and love you well!

Adele